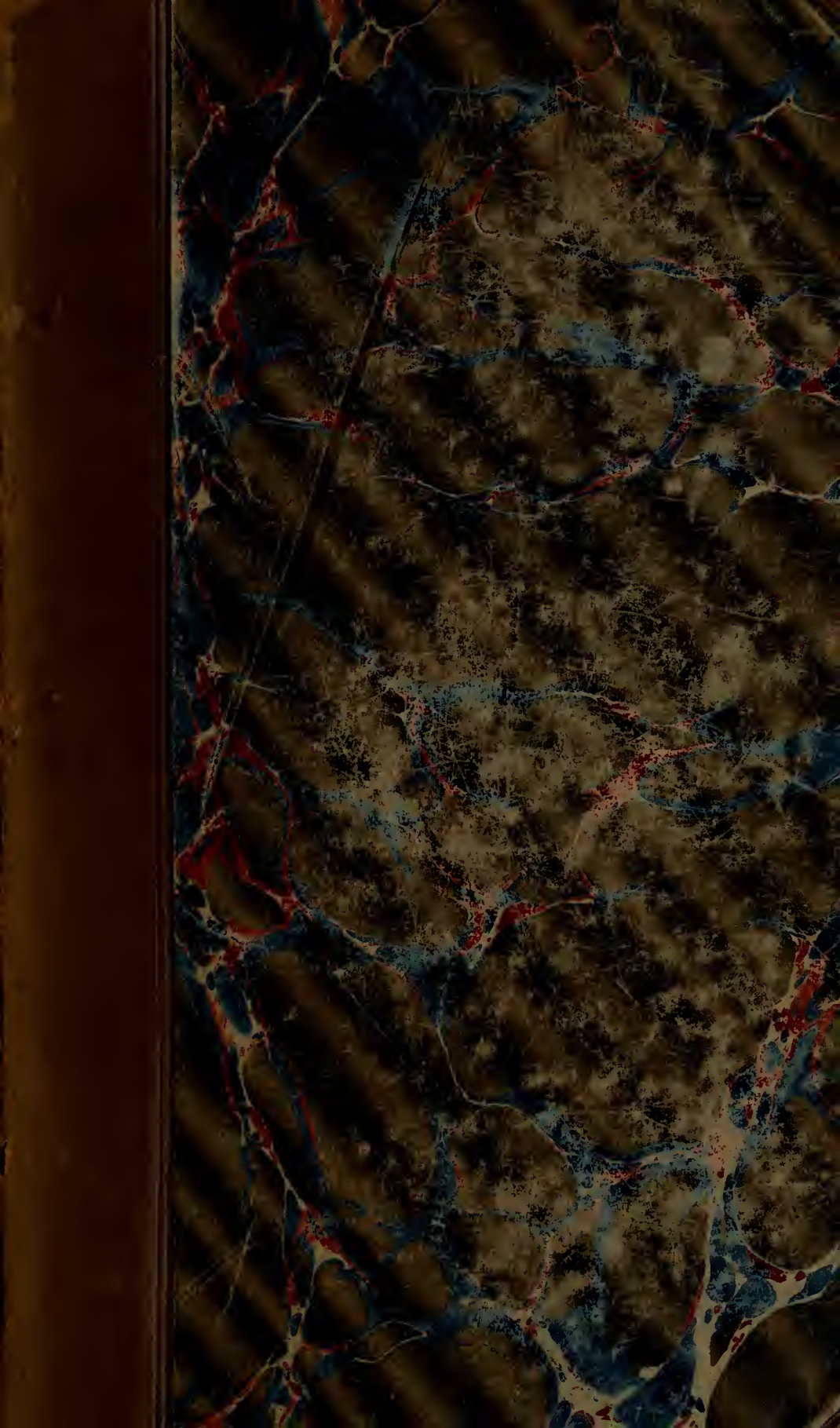






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THE
LICENSING AUTHORITY.

BY
G. W. HASTINGS, ESQ., M.P.

WITH FACTS IN REGARD TO
CANADIAN LICENSING LEGISLATION.

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THE LICENSING AUTHORITY:

An Address delivered as Chairman of a Local Option Conference for Birmingham, and the Counties of Warwick, Worcester, Stafford, and Salop, held in the large Theatre of the Midland Institute, Birmingham, on February 2nd, 1882, by G. W. HASTINGS, Esq., M.P.

The CHAIRMAN said: Ladies and gentlemen, I hope you will permit me at this early stage of the proceedings to say a few words, not perhaps so much upon the general object of the meeting as upon the reasons which have induced me to accede to the flattering request that was made to me to take the chair to-day, and as to the opinions I entertain upon some portions of the vast question that lies before you. (Applause.) There are two very good reasons why I should be ready, at any time and in any place, but most of all in a place bordering the county which I have the honour to represent in Parliament, to take part in a meeting on the licensing question. The first of those reasons is that it has been my lot now for a good many years to exercise judicial functions in the county of Worcester. That I have done now for years, not only as the chairman of my own division of the county, and therefore primarily responsible in that division for the mode in which the licensing laws are carried into effect, but also as one of the chairmen of Quarter Sessions, which, as I grieve to say, quarter after quarter have to deal with a large amount of indictable crime committed within the borders of the county. I have been compelled to feel during those years that the miserable habits of intemperance indulged in by so many in this country are not only one of the most fertile sources—for I am convinced that that would

be an inadequate expression—but *the* most fertile source of crime throughout the country. (Applause.) It has fallen to my lot both as chairman, as I have already said, in my own division, and also not infrequently as chairman of the County Licensing Committee, to be compelled to take into consideration the question whether any further facilities should be given for indulgence in habits productive of so much crime and social misery. I am very glad to say that, so far as my own division is concerned, I have never yet put my name to any new licence—(loud applause);—and I believe those justices of the county who have now, for not a few years, acted with me on the County Licensing Committee are well aware that my voice—I don't say more strongly than theirs, because it could not be stronger than that of the majority of the justices who sit upon that committee—has always been raised against any further extension of the facilities for providing intoxicating drinks for the people. (Cheers.) For that reason alone, and if I only occupied that position, I should have felt it my duty to accede to the request made to me to take the chair at this conference to-day. But there is another still more cogent reason that weighs upon my mind. No man, I think, ought ever to take any public step unless he is willing to join in carrying out his vote or action to its legitimate conclusion. (Hear, hear.) In the session of Parliament of 1880 I voted for the motion made by Sir Wilfrid Lawson—(applause)—in favour of giving a Local Option to all localities in the country upon this question; and when it was moved in the House of Commons in the session of 1881 that legislative action ought to be taken upon the resolution which had been passed in 1880, I again voted for that motion. Now I will venture to say of myself, if you will permit me to do so, that, whatever my many other shortcomings may be, I would never give a vote in Parliament for any measure upon merely abstract grounds. I would never vote for any bare principle unless I believed that it was right and expedient to carry that principle into action. (Applause.) And having voted in the first place that it was desirable that the power of Local Option should be given to the inhabitants of the various localities and districts, urban or rural, in this England of ours, and having further voted that it was desirable to give legislative action to that principle, I felt doubly bound to come here

to-day to state what my opinions are upon the measure—to state that I for one neither regret the vote that I gave, nor mean to hold back my hand from carrying that vote into practical operation. (Applause.) Now, ladies and gentlemen, you all know—for every person in England knows, and never knew better than at the present time—that there is vast opposition made to every great social change, or any great legislative change that is proposed in Parliament, and we must necessarily expect that there will be a stout opposition to carrying that resolution of the House into practical force. One of the objections undoubtedly will be this: that it is a novel principle to entrust to the hands of the people any control over the licensing laws. In one sense of the word that is true: in another and a broader sense of the word it is not true. A statesman who—whatever opinions may be entertained, and they are very diverse and keen, upon his policy—at any rate had the great merit of being able thoroughly to understand and accurately to gauge the drift of popular opinion in this country—I mean the late Lord Beaconsfield—said in the House of Commons more than a quarter of a century ago that the whole current of modern legislation in England sets in favour of a return to our ancient Saxon institutions. (Hear, hear.) There was nothing in my opinion ever said that was more true. Our judicial proceedings have come back, through our county courts, to the ancient Saxon custom, and I am much mistaken if more than a very few years pass, perhaps not more than one year will pass, before the old Saxon institution, which gave to the inhabitants of a county the power, even in a democratic form, of moulding their own legislation and carrying out their own administration, is not restored to the people. (Applause.) In the same way, and on the same principle, it would only be a genuine return to our old Saxon institutions which placed everything in the hands of the people, which trusted the people in all respects, and believed that the people, with whatever mishaps and it may be errors upon the road, would ultimately, in every phase of their social policy, arrive at what was best for themselves—if the same trust was placed in them in regard to the licensing laws of the country. (Applause.) Well, now, you may very naturally ask me why it is that, having been myself for many years entrusted with

the administration of the licensing laws, I for one can wish any change in the system. I will answer that question fairly and frankly. I do not know and I cannot know in what way the licensing laws are carried out throughout the kingdom generally—that is, I cannot know with any accuracy, but I do know with entire accuracy how they are carried out in my own county, and certainly it is not because I think they have been mal-administered, not because I think they have been even weakly administered in the county of Worcester that I desire to see any change in the system. On the contrary, I firmly believe that no authority in whose hands the licensing system could be placed would at the present time carry it out with more integrity and more ability, with a more earnest desire to effect the good of those around them, than it is now carried out by the magistracy of the county of Worcester. That is my own honest belief, based on a considerable experience and extensive knowledge. But what I have felt for a long time, and what I say now is this, that it is not enough for men that they should have ability and integrity and a desire or even resolve to do all that is right in the discharge of their functions. It often happens that with all these excellent qualifications they, to some extent, fail, because they have not behind them that popular support which is absolutely necessary in carrying out many branches of public work. And that is just what I feel, and have felt for years with regard to our licensing system. (Hear, hear.) My friend here who sits at my right—my old and highly-valued friend Mr. Steinthal, of Manchester—knows well that at a meeting of the Social Science Association that was held at Manchester in 1879, that is two years and nearly a half ago, and before I entered the House of Commons, and therefore before I had committed myself to any parliamentary pledges on the subject, I expressed publicly from the chair of one of the sections of that association my opinion, very much on the same grounds as I have just stated, that the time had arrived when the licensing authority ought to be transferred from the hands of the magistrates to the hands of some body or other elected by the ratepayers. (Applause.) I do not need to illustrate what I have said on the matter by what is perhaps a minor detail though an important one in the

administration of the licensing laws. The County Licensing Committee, which as you know is a different body, and possesses different functions from the magistracy in petty sessions—a committee, I may say, that was originally brought into existence owing to a recommendation by the Council of the Social Science Association, a recommendation conveyed by myself at the time to Mr. Secretary Bruce when he had his Licensing Bill in preparation—that county committee possesses amongst others this power: that is the power and the duty of declaring what districts in the county are of dense population, which carries with it the result of determining whether or not the licensed houses in any district may be open for an hour longer at night. We have had numerous applications from different parts of the county to declare that certain districts possess density of population. Some of these applications we have granted; many more, I think, we have refused. But I have always felt, in deciding that question—and I have frequently sat in the chair of the County Licensing Committee to decide it authoritatively—that I was in this great difficulty: there is no accurate test of what density of population means. The Act of Parliament has left us to form our own opinion upon the question: “What is density of population?” Some people might say that it is only where a large and long network of streets crowd together many thousands of population; others say—and I have heard them say—that it means every place which has not strictly a rural character; and between those two extremes it is probable that there are many different and varied opinions. Now, the real question that ought to be put on this matter, the real test of the need for keeping houses open an hour longer than they are kept open in other places, is this: whether it is desired by the population of the district. (Applause.) But upon that point we (the County Licensing Committee) have very imperfect means of forming any conclusion. It is true we get memorials upon one side and upon the other, but generally speaking they afford an exceedingly imperfect test of what the real opinion of the population of the district may be. Now I merely give that to you as an illustration, as only one illustration out of several that I could give of what the weakness of the magistracy in the present licensing system is. It is not a weak-

ness of their own ; it is a weakness that necessarily attaches to the administration of the licensing laws in their present form. It is that they are not able to arrive at any accurate opinion of what, as I say, is the real need and real test in the matter, and they have not at their backs that popular judgment which would enable them to say without hesitation and with moral force “thus” and “thus” the people of the locality who are the real judges hold as their opinion upon this question. (Loud applause.) That is speaking broadly the ground upon which I have long held and hold now that our licensing laws, or rather the authority over our licensing laws, ought to be administered by a body which has been chosen by the people at large, which therefore knows what the wants and views of the people at large are, and which will carry their wishes, as all elected bodies must necessarily do, into effect. (Applause.) Now, ladies and gentlemen, supposing that we arrive at that conclusion on this portion—and I told you that I was only going to speak on one portion—of the great question before us—supposing we arrive at the conclusion that the local authority in licensing matters ought to be an elective body, there then, no doubt, comes a very difficult question—the question in what way and on what principle that elected body ought to be constituted ? I quite admit that Parliament has a difficult programme before it when it approaches the subject, and I will tell you that the common talk in the House of Commons at the time when these Local Option resolutions have been before it has been much to this effect : “This is all very well, and we don’t disapprove of the principle, but it is quite impracticable ; there is no way of carrying it out.” I should be sorry, indeed, if this conference were held here to-day and its proceedings or anything that fell from the lips of your chairman were to give an impression to the public at large that it is impracticable to carry out that measure, or that we are not prepared to point out—not as to minute details, but at any rate on some broad plan—how it could be carried out. I, for one, am prepared to say—not at all asking you to agree with me, for I quite believe that there may be many opinions upon a complex question of this nature which may be most worthy of consideration, but I simply give it to you as my opinion as to what the best mode would be in constituting the elective authority of the kind

to which I have alluded. Now, there is one principle on which I should go if I had charge of any legislative measure on the matter, and to which I should resolutely adhere, and that is, that I should not hand over the licensing authority to any existing body or to any elected body which was charged with other administrative functions. (Loud applause.) I will tell you why I think so. It is not that existing bodies of whatever nature and with whatever functions they may have been trusted would do other than approach the licensing question with ability and with integrity, and with the same desire to promote the good of the people as I believe the present licensing authority—the magistrates—have at heart. It is not that, but it is, I think, that the addition of a licensing authority to the functions either of existing bodies, such as town councils for instance—or such as county councils if they are called into existence—would materially interfere with the exercise of their ordinary powers. I think so for this reason—a public body, an elected body, is not only responsible to the people, but it must necessarily, from the very nature of its constitution, desire above all things to carry out what its constituents tell it to do. Now if you had, we will say, a town council elected on the question of licensing, I fear that one of two things would happen with regard to its composition. Either it would be composed of persons who did not care so much about the licensing question as they would do about the other many important duties which a town council has to carry out, in which case the licensing question would run some risk of being neglected; or on the other hand it would be composed of persons who had been elected chiefly, or perhaps in many cases solely, on the ground of their opinions on the licensing question, and then, however excellent they might be in that respect, they might not be the proper men—they might not be experienced or well-qualified men—to carry out their other duties. The licensing question, as you well know, as your attendance in this theatre to-day proves, is one that engrosses great attention, and is the subject of very zealous opinion; and my belief is this, that any local body entrusted with the power, and elected for the purpose, of carrying out the views of the rate-payers upon that question, should be one elected for that purpose only, and pledged to discharge the duty according to the desire of

its constituents, whatever that desire may be. I not only expect, but I feel quite sure, that elected licensing bodies would represent in different parts of the country very different views, and they would carry out the laws in a very various manner, and so far from thinking that an evil I believe it would be a good. (Hear, hear.) I believe that, like every other exercise of the popular will, it would have a powerful effect in educating the whole body of the people on this question. Men would have to think and to reason and to work out their views upon the subject in a way, with regard to a large portion of the population, they had never done before, and will never do until it is brought home to them by having to vote upon it. I have no doubt that as time went on, and the different plans and different modes of administration carried out by the various licensing bodies were brought into operation and formed the result of a common experience, that gradually and slowly, but therefore surely, the opinion of the country would gravitate more and more towards the views that have been entertained at first by a small section of the people, now by a much larger and more powerful section, in favour of restriction. (Applause.) There is only one word more that I desire to say with respect to the formation of any new licensing bodies. I hope that whatever is done they will be constituted on wide areas. (Hear, hear.) I have had considerable experience in local administration, and year by year I have more and more come to the conclusion that the wider the area of election the more independent and, generally speaking, the more wise is the body elected. * (Applause.) Small areas, like some small inland lakes, are subject to violent gusts of opinion—they are swept hither and thither, very often in opposite directions from time to time, as every eddy of thought happens to strike them—(applause)—but larger areas have a diversity of interest and opinion which usually keeps them pretty steady, and, I believe, that if you take for instance the county of Worcester, of which I naturally speak, knowing it so well—no area less than that of the county ought to be taken for the formation of an elected licensing board. I believe that, if the inhabitants of that county, if the ratepayers at large had the power and the opportunity of electing a board for the purpose of exercising the authority under the licensing laws, men of sound judgment, and

of influence, and of high character would be sure to be placed upon it. They would have at their back the voice of the people ; they would feel the full responsibility of the power with which the people had invested them ; and I am mistaken indeed if the results arrived at and the policy followed by that board did not commend themselves in the long run to the support of all the thinking men in the county. Ladies and gentlemen, I have taken the liberty of detaining you at the opening of the proceedings—(applause)—with my opinions upon some few matters. I am very glad to meet you here to-day ; I feel sure that your deliberations, inspired, as they are, with the sole object of the good of the people—(hear, hear)—will be marked by courtesy to all, by foresight, by sagacity. As chairman, it will be my duty, after putting each resolution or amendment in succession from the chair, and having obtained your vote upon it, to communicate the conclusions you have arrived at to any authorities whom you may select. I shall do so—whether I do or do not agree altogether with every resolution that may be passed—with the utmost fidelity, and you may rely upon this, that while I necessarily hold myself unpledged in my parliamentary action by any resolutions that may be passed to-day, I, for one, as a representative of the people in Parliament, will always take care to give my vote, and, if necessary, to raise my voice in furtherance of what I believe to be one of the greatest social improvements that could be carried out, I mean such a reform in the present licensing system as may at least largely diminish the vast and terrible evils of intemperance. (Loud and prolonged applause.)

Mr. J. H. RAPER said he was sure they all desired to express to the chairman their warmest gratitude for the free exposition of his views upon this very important question. (Hear, hear.) Their object was to come to some agreement upon some things, and to send to the Cabinet as much information as they could give them in reference to the construction of their coming measure. What did they as representatives of the executive of the organisation recommend ? As far as the general construction of the bill for the regulation of the licensing system was concerned, they could give them very little light. The United Kingdom Alliance, and that included Scotland, were able to speak upon some definite

point. Scotland had a licensing system much in advance of England. On the 14th of June forty-three Scotch members voted and paired with Sir Wilfrid Lawson, and only five against him. That extraordinary vote had arrested the attention of every man thinking on the subject. How was it that Scotland was so unanimous as that? Scotland had got Sunday closing. (Hear, hear.) There were temperance men who said to them: "Let us be content by getting a Sunday Closing Bill for England." They took that as good as settled. Public opinion was ripening fast on that point, and the Government that would not give them that would not satisfy them. Surely England was not going to be left out long, after Ireland, Scotland, and Wales had been dealt with. But they took a more comprehensive view of the question than that of Sunday closing. Scotland had not the Beer Act and other developments affecting England, and in considering the proposal which had been made that the licensing power should be conferred upon town councils, Scotland could give some evidence upon that subject. The licensing system over the larger portion of Scotland had been conferred practically upon town councils. The burghs of Scotland and large towns were under corporate arrangements the same as England. In all these cases the men who act as magistrates were the bailies who are first elected by ratepayers into the councils, and there they are elected by the councils as a committee of magistrates, if they would allow the phrase. In some towns there were four, some six, some eight, and up to twelve, as in Glasgow. The bailies were the Town Council Committee for magisterial purposes, and one of their functions was the granting of licences. The chairman should mark that, as strengthening his position. He (the chairman) had made a good case against mixing up licensing authority with administrative work. It must not be said that they were irresponsible men, because they came from the people and had to go back to the people for all their power, and the people had power to reflect public opinion in that way. Did not the people of Scotland show that they wanted something more than their present law provided when they sent forty-three votes into the lobby with Sir Wilfrid Lawson, while only five went into the opposite lobby? That fact alone would be sufficient to make them cautious against mixing up licences with Town Councils.

Some Scotch people were agitating for licensing boards. They (the Alliance) could say nothing on that subject with authority. All they said was—"Whatever you do in the way of changing the licensing authority or retaining it where it is, there is one thing you can do, and that is, give to the people a direct popular veto upon the traffic, whether allowed by Crown-appointed magistrates, Town Councils, or licensing boards, or any other authority." (Applause.) The Alliance were not licensing reformers, and were not able to give special information upon the subject. If asked outside the platform or outside the Executive Committee of the Alliance what his views were on that subject, he should say that he had been to Sweden, Germany, France, Italy, and Switzerland, and had looked at the licensing systems in the United States, and had travelled from Maine to California leisurely, and had examined their plans. Further, for like purposes he had been to Canada, and if placed in the witness box he should say they needed not to look to the continent of Europe, nor to the United States for light, but they should look to Canada, where they would find the most advanced legislation bearing upon the sale of intoxicating liquor. He said that very carefully, in view of legislation, and in view of the popular direct veto. With Maine in New England and Kansas in the West, the United states still stood first for prohibition, but when they came to talk about legislation including a popular direct veto, he said that Canada was the place to obtain the most light. As to prohibition, Kansas had clearly gone ahead of all. It had excelled even Maine, because after a vote of the Legislature the people had endorsed it, that henceforth it should be unconstitutional to licence anybody to sell intoxicating drinks as beverages. Therefore their goal was Kansas; on the way they called at Maine, and saw something grand there; and further and nearer their own home they found Canada, as it stood at the present moment under the British flag. What did he find there? He found that all the principles that they were anxious about—the principle of Local Option, the principle of the Permissive Prohibitory Liquor Bill, the principle of the direct popular veto—had all been embodied in Canadian legislation within the last few years. Canada was fifty times as large as their own country, and was made up of provinces or states the

same as the United States; and they had a Federal Government being carried out in an efficient way. They had seven provinces, each having its own Legislature and laws, including licensing laws. They were greatly affected by our legislation in England; every step we took forward affected Canada. Speeches made in our Parliament which were comparatively useless here were often useful there. The *vis inertiae* of the old country did not affect them. In 1876 the Ontario Legislature abolished the system of licensing by Town Councils. The system had corrupted the Town Councils to such an extent that they were glad to get away from it. Did they take the licensing over to licensing boards? No, they conferred the duty upon Crown-appointed commissioners, with no other duty than that of licensing. There were three for each district. What powers had they? Simply the power to discriminate the right men to sell the liquor. Any discretion as to number? No. Who fixed the number? The Provincial Parliament at Ontario. The maximum was four for the first thousand and one for every four hundred of the population, men, women, and children, above the first thousand. If there were eleven thousand, that would give twenty-nine liquor shops. He would show how Local Option came in. The Town Council were empowered to reduce that number, but not to increase it. It might reduce to any extent. (Applause.) Public opinion registered itself through the Town Council, its members being elected periodically. The Town Council also had the power to raise the price of the licences, thus in reducing numbers and increasing price making it "difficult to do wrong." (Laughter.) They could raise the price up to two hundred dollars. If they go above that, they must revert to the authority by whom they were empowered, and take a popular vote as to how much higher they could go. There was then the power of limiting by high prices, and also by diminishing the number, most effectively provided in the statute. They had a motive for increasing the price, for the money came to them. For what purpose? To execute the law, and nothing else. They had to appoint inspectors, who were paid out of the funds, to see that the law was executed. He had no hesitation in saying that Ontario supplied for the British nation the best example that could be given for restrictive

legislation. But even that would not be satisfactory to the Alliance as a body. In addition to all these provisions, however, there was an act on the statute book of the Dominion of Canada, which was upon the principle of Sir Wilfrid Lawson's permissive prohibitory liquor bill. It gives electors power by memorial, to be signed by at least one-fourth of the electors capable of voting, to ask the authorities to take the opinion of the entire body whether there should be any licensed houses or none. If the Town Council were inert and sluggish, the people could set to work themselves. This was the popular direct veto, and that they (the Alliance) desired as the complement of any new legislation on the subject in this country. He did not say that as an organisation they endorsed even Canadian licensing legislation. The direct popular veto which covers all the provinces was passed at Ottawa in 1878, and *that* was an act which was clearly in the right direction, and it commanded their approval. Licensing legislation was surrounded by difficulties. Only the popular veto was clear. The other day he received a letter from one of the best workers they had in the three kingdoms, and he declared that if the United Kingdom Alliance endorsed any licensing scheme or took any part or lot in introducing a licensing bill he would at once renounce his connection with them, and denounce the Alliance as a dishonest organisation. It was clear that their work was to point the way of most easily obtaining complete freedom from licensing altogether. For that purpose they existed, and they must keep their eyes fixed on that object. The present chairman, who was also Chairman of Quarter Sessions, did not wish to say anything against magistrates. He was one himself, and an influential one too, but had put the matter so clearly as to show that he was anxious that that terrible responsibility of granting licences should be removed and given to those who could secure the fullest consensus of the opinion of the people. He was understood to express an opinion with regard to county licensing boards, and to recommend county areas for licensing purposes. Upon that point he might say that Mr. Joseph Cowen, one of the vice-presidents of the United Kingdom Alliance, had introduced a Licensing Boards Bill in the House of Commons, and when he came to fix an area he found a difficulty existed. He was anxious

to legislate in the direction of the Alliance as fully as possible, as well as to give a reflection of public opinion, falling vastly short of total prohibition ; but he found the area was a difficult question. In the smallest parish in this country, if the parishioners objected to the liquor traffic being in their midst, they should have the power of removing it. There was an Act of Parliament ten years old, an important one for towns seeking public improvements. It was the Borough Funds Act. It gave to every community through the ratepayers the power of a direct popular veto upon Improvement bills being applied for. Any bill wanted—to buy gas-works, make streets, or remove liquor shops, as they had done in Birmingham—could not be obtained without going to London. The genius of recent legislation was going back to the old Saxon form of Government, when the people voted directly for and against things. At the present time they found that Act on the Statute-book, passed by a Liberal Government, and endorsed by a Conservative Government, empowering them to give a veto on the question as to whether they should have pure water or not, and other questions. At a town's meeting for and against a proposed Improvement Bill, two men could demand a poll, and then the whole of Birmingham would have to say yes or no to that Improvement Bill. They had not far to go for machinery to enable them to say yes or no for whisky as well as for water. Manchester and Liverpool had said yes or no for water. That was a *plebiscite* of the whole community. Government would have little work to do to find an Act to enable the people to say yes or no to the question as to whether they wanted liquor shops in their parish. The question of the majority necessary had been discussed, but it was a simple majority in the Borough Funds Act, and the conviction increased that under no circumstances should a minority force liquor shops on a majority. They were therefore moving on towards a simple majority in the exercise of the popular veto. Thus, with a popular veto in force such as was provided by the Borough Funds Act and the Acts to which it referred, the opinion of a parish could be obtained, and, acting on the decision against continuing the traffic in their midst, the licensing authority, however constituted, would simply be instructed not to renew the licences which would run out at the end of the year for which

they had been granted. He knew that some people said that was not practicable legislation, but public-houses were only licensed for twelve months. If the Bench—at Worcester, for instance—refused every licence, there was no power to make them alter their decision. Quarter sessions could overrule it, but if they endorsed it there was no power in the Act to enable them to go further. They might go to the Queen's Bench; but, if sensible, they would support the local people. There is no recognition of claim in respect to a licensed house beyond twelve months. When in any parish it was wished to terminate the licence they contended most earnestly that it should be given effect to in law. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN: I think Mr. Raper has in one respect misunderstood me. What I said to-day was what has been for a very long time my opinion. It happens—I believe I am right in saying so—that at the Conference which he mentions in 1866 under the chairmanship of Sir James Shuttleworth, the resolution to which he alludes was carried by a majority after a discussion in which a good deal of difference of opinion seemed to exist. I voted for the resolution——

Mr. RAPER: I said so.

The CHAIRMAN: But more than that, I think he will find that in the year 1869, when I had the honour of being President of the Jurisprudence Department of the Social Science Association at its meeting at Bristol, I devoted a considerable portion of my address to this question, and I there went strongly for the power, in any parish or any other locality, to put an end, if it thought fit to do so, to this trade altogether. (Applause.) What I said then was this, and I say it now, that inasmuch as the report of Convocation on the subject of intemperance showed that there were upwards of 1,000 parishes in England in which the landowners would not permit any public-house within the limits of the parish, they owning the whole of it, I thought that in parishes where the people were not entirely in the hands of a single landowner they ought to have an equal power of saying, if they thought fit to do so, that there should be no public-house within the parish. (Applause.) In other words, for at least fifteen or sixteen years I have been in favour of Local Option in the shape

of a local veto. The question with which I was dealing in the commencement of the proceedings was a somewhat wider question, for I venture to affirm that no one in this room believes, nor do the public at large believe, that all the parishes of England, or nearly all, would exercise that power of veto if they had it to-morrow, and it is therefore quite clear that there should be some licensing authority and power of regulation whatever power of local veto you might give. It was with reference to the constitution of the body for exercising that authority that I was speaking. I was glad indeed to hear Mr. Raper describe so interestingly to-day the state of things in Canada. When I was there I looked a little into the matter, and I can fully corroborate all that he said, and I can only wish that we had some such system, and that side by side with the administration of the law there should be the power of a popular veto. (Hear, hear.)

